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Capture of a Bridgehead in the Area Ust'Tosno. (G)

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The operation by the units of the 55th Army in the capture of the bridgehead in the area of Ust'Tosno in August, 1942 is instructive in many respects.

The operation was conducted with the active cooperation of artillery, airforce, and small ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, and is a good example of an assault landing by ground troops. The preparation of the assault, the organization and attainment of the cooperation achieved by the assaulting troops of the Front with the artillery, air force, serves as a good example for study in the method of joint action of ground troops with sea and river fleets.

The well-conducted preparation for the assault assisted in the early attainment of success in the breakthrough of the enemy defensive position, insured the capture of Ust'Tosno and the assault on Ivanovskoye.

This example illustrates that an assault on a fortification by single units is not permissible. Besides, from this example can be found the negative results of the disregard of fortifying a captured locality.

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The Situation (Sketch 15 - not included in translation can be found on page 104 of the original). The enemy assuming the defensive along the river Tosno in September, 1942, turned the grove "Lesistaya" and the settlement Ust'Tosno into a strong centre of resistance. The settlement of Ivanovskoye was adequately covered by a good system of covering fire from the shores of the Leva and from the bend "Machto-propit". South of Ust'Tosno, almost along the railway line, there ran a ravine which served as good cover for the enemy's infantry. On the north-western edge of the ravine the enemy had constructed trenches for infantry and emplacements for machine guns and connected these with further trenches adapted for defence in depth. Height 14.0, situated near the railway line, had been built into a fortified position

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with machine gun nests.

The enemy forward defended area as well as its depth was well covered by anti-personnel devices, obstacles, wire entanglements, anti-tank obstacles, flame throwers and mine fields. The system of fire in the forward area as well as in the depth of the defence utilized cross fire, firing on fixed lines and direct fields of fire for machine guns and submachine gunners. The area of Ust'Tosno, in addition, was well covered by artillery fire from batteries and battalions stationed in Voskresenskoye, Teschanka, Rozhdestvenka, Pella, and other points. The enemy's zone of defence was 4 to 6 kms. deep and included two lines of defence. The second line of defence ran along the eastern shore of the river Tosna from the station Pokrovskoye to the north up to the Neva. The presence of a large number of buildings on the eastern shore of the river considerably strengthened the German defensive system.

The area occupied by the enemy dominated our positions and observation in depth was very difficult. Boggy ground south of the railway line limited the use of tanks.

The Organization of the Assault Landing: In August, 1942, after many unsuccessful attempts in the previous fall and winter to capture Ust'Tosno, it was decided to mount an assault with the aim of seizing the western and eastern shores of the river Tosno and to create a bridgehead in the area Ust'Tosno, Ivanovskoye, for further action in the direction of Lakhozh'ye and Otradnoye.

The task was assigned to the 268th Rifle Division which during the summer of 1942 had completed several successful battles for the capture of Futrolevo and Yam.Izhorka. An assault detachment of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet was to cooperate with the division.

The assault detachment consisted of one rifle company, a company of submachine gunners, a platoon of sappers, and a platoon of sailor submachine gunners, being armed with submachine guns, rifles, grenades and machine guns.

For the support of the operation, one detachment of landing craft composed of a battalion of guard cutters of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet

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including 16 cutters type 2iS, 15 cutter type KM and 7 cutters of other types and a detachment of direct support ships consisting of 6 armoured cutters and one cutter type "Morskoy Okhotnik" were detailed.

The strength of the assault detachment was 330 men. If one considers the task of the assault group, that it was being sent against a strongly fortified sector of the enemy's defence, it must be noted that its strength was clearly not sufficient. This was proven also by the fact that during the operation it became necessary to reinforce the assaulting group continuously. Without this, the assault would not have been successful.

The assault landing was supported by the Red Banner Baltic Fleet with three battalions of artillery, one battalion of mortars and artillery from ships (15 - 120 mm. and 4 - 180 mm. guns).

The following artillery was assembled to support the operation: guns 88 - 76 mm., 8 - 107 mm., 32 - 122 mm., 58 - 152 mm.; mortars 3 - 82 mm., 51 - 120 mm. (without taking into account the artillery of the ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, a total of 272 guns and mortars).

The available artillery gave a density of about 70 guns and mortars per 1 km. of the front. Besides that, the 86th Separate Tank Battalion, having on its establishment a variety of tanks, including heavy KV's, was assigned to the division.

The Divisional Commander's Decision. The Commander of the 268th Rifle Division decided to deliver the main thrust in the direction of the railway bridges and to destroy the enemy on the western shores of the river Tosna, after that to cross the river and to seize the line point 12.3, crossroads near the church at Ivanovskoye. At the same time to send an assault force on cutters to the eastern shore of the river at Ivanovskoye in order to capture the rail and road bridges and to prevent the enemy's escape across the river.

According to the plan, the first echelon was to consist of two regiments. The right-flanking 947th Rifle Regiment was given the assignment to seize the copse "Lesistaya", to force the river Tosna, to capture the copse "Topor" and to cover the division from any possible

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counterattacks from the south. The 952nd. Rifle Regiment, with a company of T-34 Tanks, was to break through the enemy's defence along the rail line, Ust'Tosno, then, together with the assault group, capture the bridges, destroy the enemy on the western shore, force the river Tosno, and advance to point 12.3, and cross roads near the church at Ivanovskoye. The 942nd. Rifle Regiment was given the assignment to follow the 952nd. Rifle Regiment from the area Denspirtstroy, and to fortify and hold the line captured by the first echelon.

In actual fact the actual strength of the 942nd. Rifle Regiment was not nearly high enough for it to be used as a second echelon because two companies had to be left behind to defend the area Yam.Izhora about two companies were assigned to the assault group and two companies were being used to carry mines. From the whole 942nd. Rifle Regiment, a reserve of battalion size was all that was left at the disposal of the divisional commander.

The assignments of the assault detachment were the following: after attacking the eastern shore of the river Tosno with determination to capture the bridges, to prevent the enemy from blowing them up, and to hold them until the arrival of the units of the 268th. Rifle Division, which was attacking from the west, and with the arrival of our rifle battalions on the other shore, the detachment was to come under command of the 1st. Battalion of the 952nd. Rifle Regiment.

Preparation for the Assault: All types of reconnaissance had been employed for some time to learn the enemy's disposition in the area. As the result of this, the enemy's system of fire, his prepared defence, the grouping of his forces, and their strength, were adequately known by the beginning of the battle.

In the training of the officers and men special attention had been paid to the practice of the following types of combat with small sub-units (platoon, company, and battalion): the attack, combat in trenches, combat in the depth of the enemy's defence, repulsion of counter-attack, fire control in an advance. Considerable attention was also paid to control in battle, the organization of cooperation, observation, and

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reconnaissance in the company and the battalion. The training was conducted under ^a close simulation of actual battle conditions as it was possible to achieve with the creation of defences, minefields, and live fire. In addition, special exercises in river crossing were conducted with the sappers.

During the preparatory period our artillery had learned the exact dispositions of the enemy's fire points, his observation and command posts, his fire positions of the artillery and the mortars, not only in the forward area, but also in the depth (Rozhdenstvenno, Peschanka, Ivanovskoye, Otradnoye). Prior to the start of the attack, preparatory fire was delivered and several more or less bothersome fire positions were destroyed. The positions of the direct fire weapons were fully armed.

The engineers and the troops of the rifle units prepared the departure positions for the attack: dug communication trenches, dugouts, slit trenches, constructed observation and command posts for the battalions and regiments, prepared routes for the forward movement of men and equipment. The equipment required for the crossing of the river Tosna was also moved up in good time. In the night from the 17th. to the 18th. of August, passages were cleared through the mine fields.

The regrouping of the units was done under cover and without losses. The subunits occupied their attack positions 200 to 250 meters from the forward enemy defence line.

The present attack was being materially supported with all kinds of supplies, ammunition, and means of medical evacuation. The plan of battle had been worked out in ample time.

All the officers down to the platoon commanders knew the battle tasks, their targets of attack, had studied the enemy's forward defence zone, and had reconnoitred the area of their zone of operation. The problems of communication, of concealed movement of troops, of air and anti-chemical defence had been worked out well. The preparation of the assault landing had been similarly well prepared. Special attention in that connection had been paid to

- careful reconnaissance and study of the landing zone and the sys-

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<p>em of engineered defensive constructions and the enemy's system of fire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the suitability of the loading and landing zones and the type of action which would facilitate the action of personnel and equipment. - selection and training of the personnel for the assault and the parties, landing positions. - review of the operational plan and the organization of cooperation between the various sections, of their men and equipment. <p>Information concerning the system of fire and the defensive measures undertaken by the enemy was not difficult to obtain. This information was obtainable from the artillery reconnaissance (Instrumental, and aerial). Therefore the conduct of local, specialized reconnaissance did not present many difficulties, all that was required was to systematize, to relate to the ground and verify on the spot already available information. For that purpose the known fire positions with their armament and the prepared fortifications of the enemy had all been marked on a special panorama, which had been carefully studied by all those participating in the operation, including the commanders of the cutters.</p> <p>In the period from the 14th. to the 18th. of August, reconnaissance by the officers of the assault detachments and the commanders of the batteries which were to support the assault landing was conducted.</p> <p>The disembarkation of the assault group was to take place in daylight at the same time as the start of the attack of the 268th. Rifle Division. The landing was to be preceded by an air and artillery preparation. With the approach of the assault group to the landing area the artillery fire and the air strikes were to be lifted into the depth with the purpose of suppressing the fire positions located there and to prevent the bringing up of reserves.</p> <p>As soon as the assault group had landed, it was to establish communications by radio and telephone, whichever the commander of the assault group could arrange, with the supporting artillery in order to direct the fire and indicate new targets.</p> <p>The approach of the landing craft was to be covered by a smoke screen ⁴⁴⁴ screen. For this purpose special smoke devices had been placed along the</p>		

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the shore in the area of d. Novaya and Porogy. These smoke devices could be started independently as well as by signal from the commander of the landing party or by instructions from the command point of the commander of the Leningrad naval base who had had telephone communication from his shore station, and radio communication from the ships.

The preparation of the cutter commanders included the careful study of the course to be sailed, the enemy's defensive system, and the landing area. The training of the personnel of the assault group was started on the 16th. of August and consisted of a careful study of the landing area, the enemy's system of fire, and the constructed defences in the landing area, mounting and dismounting from the cutters along the shore, tactics of the conduct of battle in seizing and defending bridges and practice in the details of assault landings.

The mouth of the river Slayyanka, the shores of which were almost the same as those of the landing zone, was chosen as the training area. In order to hide any preparation for the coming offensive all the preparations for it were conducted at night. The two ZIS cutters which were used for the training completed about 200 landings. All the weapons of the assault group were proven on the firing range.

Despite the fact that all the available time was employed to the maximum, it proved not sufficient to have all the preparations completed by the start of the operation, (the morning of the 18th. of August), for not entirely worked out were problems of coordination of the artillery and air support for the landing, problems of communication, and the problem of re-loading the assault group back on the ships in the event of the failure of the landing, and other problems.

It is necessary to point out that despite the fact that the operation had been planned for a long time, the commander of the 55th. Army only approved the plan at 0730 hours on the 18th. of August, that is, one and one-half hours before the start of the operation. Such a situation should not be considered normal, and the absence, till the last moment, of a completely worked-out and approved plan, gave the officers a feeling of doubt in the correctness and proper aim of their

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<p>undertaking.</p> <p>In the preparation of the 268th. Rifle Division there were also serious deficiencies, of which the following should be mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the absence of continuous observation of the enemy. - the poor organization of the control centres in the companies. - insufficient planning of the problems of the direction of the battle in the battalions and the regimental and divisional headquarters. - poor preparation of the non-commissioned officers in the conduct of the assault combat which had a serious effect on the direction of the squads and platoons in battle. <p>Because the officers of the landing group had not been able to reconnoitre, the Front Command delayed the operation by 24 hours, that is, to the 19th. of August.</p> <p>During the 18th. of August the final preparatory work connected with the assault landing was done and the men and equipment were brought up to full battle readiness.</p> <p>The command post of the commander of Leningrad naval base was located beside that of the commander of the 268th. Rifle Division in the area Denspirtstroy. The forward observation point was located in the area d.Novaya.</p> <p><u>The Capture of Ust'Tosno and the Landing of the Assault Group</u></p> <p>By 1100 hours on the 19th. of August the greater part of the troops were ready and waiting for the starting signal, but, because of poor visibility and the unpreparedness of several units of the artillery of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, the start of the operation was delayed one hour. The instruction to delay the start for an hour did not reach all of the units in time, as the result of which the right flanking artillery units started their fire at the time set in the original plan. The Air Force also struck at the hour which had been set earlier. The premature opening of fire by the artillery and air force at once confused the insufficiently well organized direction of troops.</p> <p>At 1205 hours the artillery preparation was started. At 1300 hours</p>		

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the units of the division started to attack.

The 947th. Rifle Regiment, attacking copse "Lesistaya", and the bend of the river Tosno, advanced slowly and suffered heavy casualties from mortar and machine gun fire. The regiment was unable to break the enemy's defences by nightfall. The majority of the regiment's subunits bogged down near the copse and only the third battalion, together with the assault group, captured the railway bridge. But this battalion, because the troops failed to dig in and camouflage, suffered heavy losses and was unable to hold the bridge. By 1500 hours the enemy had recovered from the first blow and started to transfer a new battalion by motor transport from Nikolskaya, which reinforced the garrison of copse "Lesistaya" and reoccupied the bend of the river. Because of this, conditions for the 947th. Rifle Regiment became even worse and it lost about 50% of its personnel.

The 952nd. Rifle Regiment, on the left flank, had success, its battalions advancing at a good speed. The enemy, as a result of heavy strikes by artillery, mortars and aircraft, and the attack on its rear and flanks by the landing group, as well as the determined attack from the front, started to withdraw. The 3rd. Battalion of the 952nd. Rifle Regiment broke through the enemy's forward defended line and by 1700 hours took Ust'Tosno. The 1st. Battalion of the regiment, exploiting the success of the 3rd. Battalion, crossed the river Tosno by the highway bridge and occupied the ravine south of Ivanovskoye. Two companies of the 942nd. Rifle Regiment crossed with it to the other shore.

The Battalion of the 942nd. Rifle Regiment, which up till then had been kept in reserve, was now brought forward to clear the remaining enemy held positions in the area Ust'Tosno and to support the further advance.

The assault landing proceeded as follows. The embarkation of the assault group started at 0930 hours and was completed in 17 minutes and then the assault detachment, consisting of 16 ZIS cutters, 6 M cutters, 6 armored cutters, and one MO cutter, proceeded to its departure position.

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At 1205 hours, the assault detachment, under cover of heavy artillery fire, started to move to the landing zone. As the detachment approached the landing area the artillery fire was lifted to the depth, but the armored cutters and the shore station near d. Novaya started to lay a smoke screen which prevented observation of the assault detachment from the enemy held shore.

By 1305 hours the troops from the first group of cutters had disembarked and by 1320 hours the remainder was ashore. At the same time the 952nd. Rifle Regiment, supported by artillery, aircraft and tanks, started its attack on the Ust'Tosno centre of enemy resistance.

As a result of the heavy artillery and air preparation the greater portion of the fire capons and of the prepared fences in the landing area were destroyed and the defending troops were demoralized. Because of the smoke screen the enemy could not aim directed fire at the landing party and disembarkation, therefore, proceeded without serious losses and quite quickly. Quick and decided action broke the resistance of the enemy machine gunners and within 40 minutes the landing party had seized the highway and railway bridges. The assault landing and the following attack had been so unexpected by the enemy that he was unable to blow up any of the bridges despite the fact that they were adequately mined. The sappers which were following the assault detachment quickly lifted the mines and thereby eliminated the possibility of having the bridges blown up. Seizing the roads leading up to the bridges and organizing their defence, the assault detachment cut the avenue of approach by the enemy's reserves from other sectors and thereby facilitated the successful attack of the units of the 68th. Rifle Division. At 1530 hours ^{connection} telephone had already been established with the second assault echelon.

At 1455 hours the second group, consisting of a reinforced rifle company of the 942nd. Rifle Regiment was landed by four cutters. The enemy, showing determined resistance, delivered heavy artillery and mortar fire against the assaulting group and on the place of disembark-

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ation. The assault detachment was able to lift the mines from the bridges and to enlarge the bridgehead to Ivanovskoye, placing a battle outpost near the church. In order to coordinate the activity of the landing party it was imperative that it come under command of the 952nd Rifle Regiment immediately on arrival, the commander of which was stationed not far from the highway bridge on the western shore of the river Tosna. The failure to do this made the landing party's task much more difficult and affected the course of the whole battle.

As a result of the landing party's success in the area of Ivanovskoye, outposts reached the village of Pella. The situation in this ~~area~~ area developed satisfactorily. On the 19th. of August, with the commitment of the necessary forces in the area of Ivanovskoye, the task of widening the bridgehead on the eastern shore of the river Tosna would have been decided. But the arrival of reinforcements did not take place.

Summarizing the battle of the 19th. of August, the right flank of the division (the 947th. Rifle Regiment), was stopped in front of the copse "Lesistaya", a battalion of the 947th. Rifle Regiment forced the river Tosna in the area of the railroad bridge with the purpose of exploiting success in the direction of the copse "Topor", but this proved to be too much and it did not complete its task for the day.

The regiments of the 268th. Rifle Division, suffering heavy losses did not have enough strength left to exploit their success. The divisional command, not knowing the difficult position of the regiments, tried to fulfil the divisional assignment with insufficient and weakened forces.

The efficient landing operation on the 19th. of August, the successful penetration of the forward line of the enemy's defences, the capture of Ust'Tosno and of the bridges on the first day - all this was achieved as the result of the good preparation for the attack. The success achieved on the first day should have been quickly reinforced by the transfer of at least two regiments to the eastern shore on that day, with the assignment of capturing Pella and Pokrovskoye

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and at the same time with a determined attack destroy the enemy in the copse "Lesistaya", in order to deny him the opportunity of bringing up reserves from the south. But such extra forces were not available and the opportune moment was allowed to slip by. The enemy, however, used that time to bring up reserves into the battle area.

The Attempt to Develop the Success : (Sketch 16 - not included in the transcription - can be found on page 111 of the original.) On the instruction of the Front Commander, the 268th. Rifle Division was given the 342nd. Rifle Regiment of the 136th. Rifle Division on the 19th. of August, for the purpose of relieving the 947th. Rifle Regiment which had suffered such heavy losses. After the relief the 342nd. Rifle Regiment was to attack copse "Lesistaya" with the assignment of seizing it and to cover the 268th. Rifle Division from a possible attack from the south.

The 342nd. Rifle Regiment, after a night march, occupied its battle position at 0500 hours on the 20th. of August. At 0200 hours on the 20th. of August the divisional commander changed the assignment of the regiments - the 947th. Rifle Regiment, after it had been relieved by two battalions of the 342nd., was to withdraw to the second echelon, and one battalion of that regiment was given the task of strengthening the defenses of the bridges. But the commander's orders were not entirely fulfilled, since the second battalion of that regiment could not disengage and fought the whole of the 20th. of August with the units of the 342nd. Rifle Regiment.

The 942nd. Rifle Regiment was given the assignment to seize copse "Topor".

The 952nd. Rifle Regiment, together with the remainder of the assault detachment, was to seize the area Ivanovskoye.

The enemy having suffered heavy losses during the 19th. of August, quickly started to move up reserves. To assist the battalion which was holding "Lesistaya" the 151st. Infantry Regiment of the 61st. Infantry Division was transferred on the 19th. of August by motor transport at Peschanka, from where the regiment was marching along the western shore

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<p>of the river Tosno in the area of the railway line. At 0300 hours on the 20th. of August under cover of darkness, the second battalion of the 151st. Infantry Regiment started to attack, seized the railway bridges and the approaches and pushed into Ust'Tosno.</p> <p>The situation became more difficult, the arrival of the enemy's reserves threatened to destroy the successes of the previous day. But the divisional commander and his staff did not evaluate the situation the same way. They continued to insist on further attempts to capture copse "Topor" while it was obviously necessary to concentrate on the defence of the captured bridges, the clean-up of the western shore from enemy remnants, and to reinforce the assault at Ivanovskoye.</p> <p>The appearance of subunits of the 151st. Infantry Regiment in the area of the railroad bridges and the approaches can only be explained by the lack of alertness of the subunit commanders of the 947th. and the 952nd. Rifle Regiment who did not appreciate the tactical importance of the boundary, did not dig in, and by that gave the enemy the opportunity to seize the bridges without much difficulty and to entrench in the area of the gully. This misfortune resulted from bad command organization and the lack of attention given to the right flank which, during the night to the 20th. of August, was, in fact, not covered.</p> <p>The Commander of the 342nd. Rifle Regiment received the orders to attack copse "Lesistyay" only at 1930 hours on the 19th. of August. Because of the insufficient amount of time the officers were not able to study their assignment sufficiently. The field of battle was reconnoitred only superficially; the enemy's defences were also not studied sufficiently. Despite the personal warning by the Army Commander not to hurry but to prepare the attack carefully, the commander of the 342nd. Rifle Regiment, on the advice of the commander of the 136th. Rifle Division, moved his regiment into the attack prematurely. The subunits which started the attack came under well-organized enemy mortar and machine gun fire, suffered heavy losses, and were unable to fulfill their assignment. The remaining regiments of the 268th. Division, on</p>		

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that day repulsed a counter attack by the enemy who was mopping up its remnants on the western shore, and was not able to complete the tasks assigned to it for the 20th. of August.

Starting with the 20th. of August, the enemy started to increase his efforts against the assault detachment, trying to destroy it. The subunits of the detachment fought with determination to retain their bridgehead, repulsing a large number of tanks and aircraft supported enemy attacks. The divisional commander feeling the danger of losing Ivanovskoye, decided to transfer to that area the whole of the 952nd. Rifle Regiment under the Regimental Commander. On the 21st. of August, it was not possible to cross because the enemy had the river Tosno under heavy fire from the eastern shore. In time the crossing was prevented and 7 cutters were burned. A difficult situation developed for the eastern detachment.

Seeing the disjointed action and the poor direction of the divisional units the Front Commander directed on the evening of the 20th. of August:

1. During the 21st. of August to seize the gorges south of Ust'Tosno, to cover properly the concrete and steel bridge, and to attain joint action along this bridge with the eastern detachment.

2. Not to allow further reinforcements by the enemy on the western shore of the river Tosno neither by the railway nor the pontoon bridge. The pontoon bridge was to be destroyed by fire (as it was revealed later, there was no pontoon bridge; prisoner statements regarding it had been false.).

3. to cover the right flank firmly, and to prevent any movement by the enemy along the western shore line of the river Tosno from copse "Lesistaya".

4. to reinforce the eastern detachments with men and materials.

Besides that, the army staff decided to reinforce the eastern detachment from its own resources and to transfer to the eastern shore of the river Tosno one battalion of the 389th. Regiment of the 70th. Rifle Division headed by the regimental commander. This battalion got

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<p>lost in the fog when it started the crossing at 0500 hours on the 21st. of August; part of the battalion disembarked at the village Novaya, part at Ust'Tosno, part in Poroga (on the right shore of the river Neva), and only an insignificant number landed at Ivanovskoye.</p> <p>Since reinforcements failed to arrive, the position of the defenders of Ivanovskoye deteriorated further. The unsuccessful attempt by the battalion of the 329th. Rifle Regiment to cross to the eastern shore of the river Tosno illustrates the point that a crossing, even in familiar territory, at night and with fog, needs very careful preparation. Prior to the crossing it would have been necessary to erect a sufficient number of beacons on the shore of the river Neva which would have indicated the route and the place of landing.</p> <p>By the morning of the 21st. of August the enemy continued to hold copse 'Lesistaya', the western shore of the river Tosno up to the railway, point 14.0 and the gullies south of Ust'Tosno.</p> <p>On the 21st. and the 22nd. of August the division continued attempts to fulfill its assigned task, but did not achieve any realistic results. The 342nd. Rifle Regiment, attacked in the direction of airfield and the bend of the river and occupied it, but was unable to hold it since the enemy with a strong counter attack by newly arrived reserves dislodged the regimental subunits from the bend. The withdrawal of the 342nd. Rifle Regiment from the bend exposed the right flank of the division and enabled the enemy again to move to the bridges further along the western shore of the river Tosno.</p> <p>During the 1st. of August the staff of the 952nd. Rifle Regiment organized the crossing of a subunit to the eastern shore of the river Tosno. The organization of a crossing in the absence of new arrivals consumed much strength and time. The subunits of the 942nd. and 947th. Rifle Regiments fought unsuccessfully for the railroad bridges and also mopped up enemy remnants along the western shore of the river Tosno (up to the railroad). In the day's fighting they failed to occupy the bridges and to establish contact via these with the eastern detachments.</p> <p>The eastern detachment suffered heavy losses as the result of the</p>		

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continuous battle. The 268th. Rifle Regiment could not, from its own resources, reinforce the detachment. Afterwards, units of the 952nd. Rifle Regiment succeeded in crossing to Ivanovskoye, but the regiment, having suffered such serious losses in earlier battles, did not possess any appreciable strength. As a result of this the Front command assigned three battalions as reinforcements to the division, and, in addition, with the permission of the Army Commander, one battalion was taken from the reserve regiment.

As a result of the large number of reinforcements, a detachment consisting of 300 men with sappers, was transferred to Ivanovskoye during the night of the 22nd. and the morning of the 23rd. of August. The detachment completed the fortification of the captured area in Ivanovskoye. The commander of the 952nd. Rifle Regiment was able to have two companies cross to the eastern shore via the highway bridge in the night of the 23rd. of August, they started to dig in immediately in Ivanovskoye.

The officers and men which had been transferred to the eastern shore of the river Tosno displayed extreme daring and steadfastness. Communications between the landing group and the division was frequently broken, the group had to fight completely isolated for several days, with shortages of ammunition and food. They repulses repeated enemy attacks. Beside that, the enemy held the assault detachment under continuous artillery and mortar fire. The defenders of Ivanovskoye were able to organize a defence and to hold the occupied positions. On the 23rd. of August the enemy attacked the assault group with the newly brought up 25th. Motorized Infantry Regiment of the 12th. Tank Division. Units of this regiment pushed our battle outposts out of the village Lebla. By determined resistance of the assault group the enemy was held at the church in Ivanovskoye.

On the morning of the 23rd. of August the 342nd. Rifle Regiment started an attack with the assignment of occupying the railroad bridges and to capture the river bend south of these. The capture of the river bend was of decisive importance to the seizing of the bridges.

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The 942nd. Rifle Regiment was able during the day to destroy several of the enemy's defended points in the area of the branch ravine. Part of the regiment's force participated in the battle for the railroad bridges. The plan to capture the railroad bridges and the ravines attached of it was not fulfilled. The battle of the 23rd. of August showed that the division was not able any more to achieve success. The division demanded that active operations be discontinued and the defensive line to be assumed.

Conclusions and Deductions : As the result of the battle for Ust'Tosno of the 908th. Rifle Division in cooperation with the assault landing of the detachment of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet seized Ust'Tosno and the eastern part of Ivanovskoye, exclusive of the church. In the course of the battle the Hitlerites lost about 5000 men killed and wounded.

Besides this, the five day battle for Ust'Tosno showed a number of faults in the direction of the battle. All units at all levels showed a lack of decisiveness to platoon and squads. This fact had a marked effect on the whole, well thought out operation.

The experience of the battle for the seizure of a position of Ust'Tosno allows the following deductions to be made:

1. An attack which includes a river (or sea) landing is one of the most difficult kinds of joint operations of ground and naval military forces.

Of decisive influence on the successful accomplishment of an assault landing were: careful preparation, the surprise of the first strike, the coordination of the river landing with the activity of the attacking ground force units.

The error made in failing to surprise, the composition of the assault group and its supporting elements in relation to its task, due to the difficulties experienced in the battle for Ivanovskoye. The command echelons from division to front spent considerable time in getting and supplies in feeding additional men and equipment to the assault group, but since this was done in small segments in the absence of crossing facilities, it is clear that the reinforcements did not lead

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to the desired result. It developed that not the enlargement of the bridgehead but the technical support of the assault group became the main task.

The assault landing confirmed the requirements of the "Instructions for Joint Action of Ground Forces with the Naval Fleet and River Flotillas, 1942" from the experience of the Patriotic War.

2. The 268th. Rifle Division was given a limited assignment and therefore did not make provision for a reserve capable of operating in depth. But the battle for Ust'Tesno showed that with the provision of reserves at the beginning of the operation the task of capturing the objective could have been accomplished during the 19th. and 20th. of August. It seems, therefore, that the errors in the organization and conduct of the battle were: failure to evaluate the enemy's capability of resistance, his ability to move reserves, insufficiencies in evaluation of his system of fire, as well as poor observation by the artillery and troops on the field of battle.

3. Experience showed that the breakthrough on a narrow front through a long-held enemy defence without corresponding action on other sectors is not wise because it gives the enemy a wide opportunity to move his reserves and fire to liquidate the penetration. This is brought out by the experience of the 268th. Rifle Division, which already on the second day of the attack experienced strong resistance from mobilized enemy reserves.

4. In the planning of an operation the enemy's capability to move his reserves has to be taken into account. In this action the enemy's capability to transfer reserves quickly had not been assessed. As a result of the quick transfer of reserves by the enemy, the original strength ratio soon changed in his favour. Within two days the enemy transferred no less than six battalions from various divisions.

5. The failure to fortify the area captured from the enemy also seriously reduced the success of the first day of the attack. In the night to the 20th. of August the enemy was able, without too much difficulty, to re-capture the railway bridges, to dislodge the captured

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the 1st. Battalion of the 952nd. Regiment from the ravine south of the town of Iavnovs'koye and to push through into the ravine south of Ust'Tosno. This example again illustrates that in an attack fortifying a captured area is of prime importance.

6. The piecemeal introduction into battle of reserves which advanced in small segments and at intervals was one of the main reasons why the success of the first day of the attack could not be exploited. At this time the situation would have allowed the expansion of the bridgehead through the simultaneous commitment of the 342nd. and 329th. Rifle Regiments, and with sufficient artillery support.

7. Uninterrupted supporting fire in depth while the infantry attacks is a major reason for its success. In the battle for Ust'Tosno the artillery was unable to provide this: the assigned guns opened not effectively enough a number of secondary targets. At the same time it must be remarked that the infantry did not employ its weapons properly while fighting in the depth, it did not camouflage itself enough and dug in too slowly, not taking into account the location of ant-tank positions.

8. The artillery completed the tasks assigned to it, but in its work there were several deficiencies. In the protracted battle the enemy's fire positions and system were not well enough analyzed. Artillery observation and reconnaissance did not work properly. Cooperation with the infantry commanders was often non-existent.

As a great fault must be listed the fact that the regimental artillery was so late in being transferred to the eastern shore of the river Tosno and also that the artillery fire positions were too far away from their targets. Besides that, the enemy taking advantage of the favorable terrain cleverly changed the fire positions of their batteries which made it especially difficult to locate them. This reduced the effectiveness of our artillery fire. For this reason it was difficult to suppress and isolate the newly arriving enemy reinforcements which were inflicting heavy casualties on our infantry.